



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The Lord of the Isles ; a poem, by Walter Scott, Esq. Boston, republished by Wells & Lilly. pp. 367, 24mo. Price one dollar.

THE poems of Mr. Scott have been so universally read, so often and so elaborately criticised, that nothing new can be said on the subject. The present production, to borrow an expression of Lord Byron's, is another of his 'triumphs over the fatal facility of the octosyllabick verse ;' perhaps it may not be more than an ovation ; it cannot compare with the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, or the *Lady of the Lake*. There is much mediocrity in this poem ; it has no passage that can be placed in competition with several in those just mentioned, nor are there any which are particularly tame and insipid. It is one of the longest of his performances, and the notes occupy as much space as the poem of which they are the foundation. We think in the present instance, as in all he has published since the *Lady of the Lake*, he has rather added to his fortune than increased his fame ; his later works may be reprinted, but the former ones only will be read by posterity. With all our reverence for the old school of poetry, for the versification of Dryden and Pope, and aware how fleeting is that popularity, which was caught by the novelty of his manner, and the romance of his subjects, we still believe, that the freshness, energy, relief and transparency of his description, as well as the vigour and enthusiasm of some of his sentiments, will ensure him immortality.

The restoration of the Scottish monarchy by Robert Bruce in 1307, and the events attending his enterprise from his return to Scotland, till he fought the decisive battle of Bannockburn, form the ground-work of this poem ; but a very great part of its interest is derived from a romantick love story which is blended with it, and seems to be entirely the invention of the poet, as he cites no authority for it in the notes, though most of the incidents relating to Bruce, are historical facts. The scene opens in the Castle of Artornish belonging to Ronald, the Lord of the Isles, who was to marry Edith, the daughter of Lorn, a principal Scottish chief, the personal enemy of Bruce, and altogether in the English interest. According to the custom of that time, the bride had been taken to one of the

castles of her future husband. It was however a reluctant match on his part, as he had conceived a passion for Isabel, the sister of Bruce, then in a convent at Iona, where she afterwards took the veil. At the very time that the Lord of the Isles was on his way, from one of the islands accompanied by a fleet of boats, Bruce with his younger brother and sister, were in a frail bark, beating about, afraid to land in a district where they were all opposed to him. The miserable condition of the vessel however, forces him to seek for hospitality at this castle of Artornish. He lands, demands shelter, and with his brother and Isabel, is led into the festive hall, where Ronald, Lorn, and many Highland chiefs are assembled to celebrate the nuptials, waiting only for the arrival of the abbot of Iona to perform the ceremony. The proud, majestick manners of Bruce leads to a discovery, and the whole party are thrown into the wildest confusion. Lorn insists on destroying Bruce in revenge for the death of one of his relations killed by Bruce and his friends some years before. The presence of Isabel, and unwillingness to marry Edith, joined with national feelings, prompt Ronald to take the side of Bruce, in which course he is followed by many other chieftains. The abbot called upon to curse, blesses Bruce, predicts his success, and then sets out on his return. Lorn denounces vengeance, but on taking his departure, finds that his daughter and her nurse have fled. They had disguised themselves and entered the abbot's boat. This boat was afterwards taken by some assassins in the service of Lorn, who were employed by him to destroy Bruce. Edith, disguised in boy's clothes, became their prisoner, and pretended to be dumb. These ruffians are met with by Bruce, and in attempting to destroy him, are all killed, and Edith remains with him; he takes her as his page, his own having been killed in this encounter. There are in the following cantos many interesting scenes with Edith, who remains in disguise, and is with the Scottish army at the battle of Bannockburn, where she was left with a numerous body of the attendants in the rear, on a hill from that time called the Gillies (the Scotch term for servants) hill. At a critical moment of the battle, anxiety for Ronald makes her burst into a vehement call to those about her, to fly to their succour. As she was supposed to be dumb, this affected them like a miracle; they all

moved on, the English army seeing them at a distance, took them for a reinforcement, and being still more disheartened, fled from the sanguinary field, in which they had lost the flower of their army. After the battle, Ronald and Edith are united, and Robert is confirmed on the throne of Scotland.

This is a sketch of the main features of the story : we shall make several extracts from different parts, and which may enable those who have not seen the whole poem to estimate it in comparison with his former works. The introductory stanzas to this and many of his other works, are an imitation of Spenser's introductory verses to the cantos of his *Faery Queen*. The first of the following extracts is the commencement of the second canto ; the next of the sixth, which is strongly descriptive of the termination of the late European war ; the last, which is the conclusion of the poem, is full of feeling.

“ Fill the bright goblet, spread the festive board,
Summon the gay, the noble, and the fair !
Through the loud hall in joyous concert pour'd,
Let mirth and musick sound the dirge of Care !
But ask thou not if Happiness be there,
If the loud laugh disguise convulsive throes,
Or if the brow the heart's true livery wear ;
Lift not the festal mask !—enough to know,
No scene of mortal life but teems with mortal wo.”—C. II.

“ O who, that shared them, ever shall forget
The emotions of the spirit-rousing time,
When breathless in the mart the couriers met,
Early and late, at evening, and at prime ;
When the loud cannon and the merry chime
Hail'd news on news, as field on field was won,
When Hope, long doubtful, soar'd at length sublime,
And our glad eyes, awake as day begun,
Watch'd Joy's broad banner rise, to meet the rising sun !

“ O these were hours, when thrilling joy repaid
A long, long course of darkness, doubts, and fears !
The heart-sick faintness of the hope delay'd,
The waste, the wo, the bloodshed, and the tears,
That track'd with terroure twenty rolling years,
All was forgot in that blith jubilee !
Her down-cast eye even pale Affliction rears,
To sigh a thankful prayer, amid the glee,
That hail'd the Despot's fall, and peace and liberty !”—C. VI.

"Go forth, my Song, upon thy venturous way;
 Go boldly forth; nor yet thy master blame,
 Who chose no patron for his humble lay,
 And graced thy numbers with no friendly name,
 hose partial zeal might smooth thy path to fame.
There was—and O! how many sorrows crowd
 Into these two brief words!—*there was* a claim
 By generous friendship given—had fate allow'd,
 It well had bid thee rank the proudest of the proud!

"All angel now—yet little less than all,
 While still a pilgrim in our world below!
 What 'vails it us that patience to recall,
 Which hid its own, to sooth all other wo;
 What 'vails to tell, how Virtue's purest glow
 Shone yet more lovely in a form so fair;—
 And, least of all, what 'vails the world should know,
 That one poor garland, twined to deck thy hair,
 Is hung upon thy hearse, to droop and wither there!"—C. VI.

We cannot help remarking, that the facility with which Mr. Scott introduces the most uncouth and barbarous Gaelick names, and blends them with the smoothest versification, creates almost a feeling of vexation in those who often labour in vain to produce harmonious rhymes, with common and flexible words. Many proofs of his power in this respect may be found in this poem. The following passages will shew the force and beauty of his descriptions. The first paints a wild scene near the sea shore in the Highlands, from canto third. The others are fragments from the relation of his voyage among the islands, from the fourth canto. The first of these describes the magnificent cave of Fingal in the island of Staffa.

"Awhile their route they silent made,
 As men who stalk for mountain-deer,
 Till the good Bruce to Ronald said,
 'St. Mary! what a scene is here!
 I've travers'd many a mountain-strand,
 Abroad and in my native land,
 And it has been my lot to tread
 Where safety more than pleasure led;
 Thus, many a waste I've wander'd o'er,
 Clombe many a crag, cross'd many a moor,
 But, by my halidome,
 A scene so rude, so wild as this,
 Yet so sublime in barrenness,

Ne'er did my wandering footsteps press,
Where'er I happ'd to roam.'—

“No marvel thus the Monarch spake;
Far rarely human eye has known
A scene so stern as that dread lake,
With its dark ledge of barren stone.
Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
Hath rent a strange and shatter'd way
Through the rude bosom of the hill,
And that each naked precipice,
Sable ravine, and dark abyss,
Tells of the outrage still.
The wildest glen, but this, can show
Some touch of Nature's genial glow;
On high Benmore green mosses grow,
And heath-bells bud in deep Glencoe,
And copse on Cruchan-Ben,
But here, above, around, below,
On mountain or in glen,
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power,
The weary eye may ken.
For all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
As if were here denied
The summer sun, the spring's sweet dew,
That clothe with many a varied hue
The bleakest mountain-side.

“And wilder, forward as they wound,
Were the proud cliffs and lake profound.
Huge terraces of granite black
Afforded rude and cumber'd track;
For from the mountain hoar,
Hurl'd headlong in some night of fear,
When yell'd the wolf and fled the deer,
Loose crags had toppled o'er;
And some, chance-poised and balanced, lay,
So that a stripling arm might sway
A mass no host could raise,
In Nature's rage at random thrown,
Yet trembling like the Druid's stone
On its precarious base.
The evening mists, with ceaseless change,
Now clothed the mountains' lofty range,
Now left their foreheads bare,

And round the skirts their mantle furl'd,
 Or on the sable waters curl'd,
 Or, on the eddying breezes whirl'd,
 Dispersed in middle air.
 And oft, condensed, at once they lower,
 When, brief and fierce, the mountain shower
 Pours like a torrent down,
 And when return the sun's glad beams,
 Whiten'd with foam a thousand streams
 Leap from the mountain's crown."—CANTO III.

"Merrily, merrily, goes the bark
 On a breeze from the northward free,
 So shoots through the morning sky the lark,
 Or the swan through the summer sea.
 The shores of Mull on the eastward lay,
 And Ulva dark and Colonsay,
 And all the groupe of islets gay
 That guard famed Staffa round.
 Then all unknown its columns rose,
 Where dark and undisturb'd repose
 The cormorant had found,
 And the shy seal had quiet home,
 And welter'd in that wondrous dome,
 Where, as to shame the temples deck'd
 By skill of earthly architect,
 Nature herself, it seem'd, would raise
 A Minster to her Maker's praise!
 Not for a meaner use ascend
 Her columns, or her arches bend;
 Nor of a theme less solemn tells
 That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
 And still, between each awful pause,
 From the high vault an answer draws,
 In varied tone prolong'd and high,
 That mocks the organ's melody.
 Nor doth its entrance front in vain
 To old Iona's holy fane,
 That Nature's voice might seem to say,
 'Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!
 Thy humble powers that stately shrine
 Task'd high and hard—but witness mine!'"—C. IV.

"Now launch'd once more, the inland sea
 They furrow with fairy augury,
 And steer for Arran's isle;
 The sun, ere yet he sunk behind
 Ben-ghoil, 'the Mountain of the Wind,'

Gave his grim peaks a greeting kind,
 And bade Lock-Ranza smile.
 Thither their destin'd course they drew;
 It seem'd the isle her monarch knew,
 So brilliant was the landward view,
 The ocean so serene;
 Each puny wave in diamonds roll'd
 O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold
 With azure strove and green.
 The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,
 Glow'd with the tints of evening's hour,
 The beach was silver sheen,
 The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,
 And, oft renew'd, seem'd oft to die,
 With breathless pause between.
 O who, with speech of war and woes,
 Would wish to break the soft repose
 Of such enchanting scene!"—CANTO IV.

The description of the battle has many fine passages, though as a whole it is inferior to the battle in *Marmion*. We regret that we can only take some fragments of it; the 19th, 20th, 24th, and 26th stanzas. The stratagem of digging holes to throw the cavalry into confusion, and which greatly contributed to the loss of the battle by Edward, is related in a very picturesque way.

"It was a night of lovely June,
 High rode in cloudless blue the moon,
 Demayet smiled beneath her ray;
 Old Stirling's towers arose in light,
 And, twined in links of silver bright,
 Her winding river lay.
 Ah, gentle planet! other sight
 Shall greet thee, next returning night,
 Of broken arms and banners tore,
 And marshes dark with human gore,
 And piles of slaughter'd men and horse,
 And Forth that floats the frequent corse,
 And many a wounded wretch to plain
 Beneath thy silver light in vain!
 But now, from England's host, the cry
 Thou hear'st of wassail revelry,
 While from the Scottish legions pass
 The murmur'd prayer, the early mass!—
 Here, numbers had presumption given;
 There, bands o'er-match'd sought aid from heaven."

“ On Gillie’s-hill, whose height commands
The battle-field, fair Edith stands,
With serf and page unfit for war,
To eye the conflict from afar.
O! with what doubtful agony
She sees the dawning tint the sky!—
Now on the Ochils gleams the sun,
And glistens now Demayet dun;
 Is it the lark that carols shrill,
 Is it the bittern’s early hum?
No!—distant, but increasing still,
The trumpet’s sound swells up the hill,
 With the deep murmur of the drum.
Responsive from the Scottish host,
Pipe-clang and bugle-sound were toss’d,
His breast and brow each soldier cross’d,
 And started from the ground;
Arm’d and array’d for instant fight,
Rose archer, spearman, squire and knight,
And in the pomp of battle bright
 The dread battalia frown’d.”

“ The King with scorn beheld their flight.
‘ Are these,’ he said, ‘ our yeomen wight?
Each braggart churl could boast before,
Twelve Scottish lives his baldrick bore?
Fitter to plunder chase or park,
Than make a manly foe their mark.—
Forward, each gentleman and knight!
Let gentle blood shew generous might,
And chivalry redeem the fight!’—
 To rightward of the wild affray,
 The field shew’d fair and level way;
 But, in mid-space, the Bruce’s care
Had bored the ground with many a pit,
With turf and brushwood hidden yet,
 That form’d a ghastly snare.
Rushing, ten thousand horsemen came,
With spears in rest, and hearts on flame,
 That panted for the shock!
With blazing crests and banners spread,
And trumpet-clang and clamour dread,
The wide plain thunder’d to their tread,
 As far as Stirling rock.
Down! down! in headlong overthrow,
Horseman and horse, the foremost go,
 Wild floundering on the field!

The first are in destruction's gorge,
 Their followers wildly o'er them urge ;—
 The knightly helm and shield,
 The mail, the acton, and the spear,
 Strong hand, high heart, are useless here !
 Loud from the mass confused the cry
 Of dying warriors swells on high,
 And steeds that shriek in agony !
 They came like mountain-torrent red,
 That thunders o'er its rocky bed ;
 They broke like that same torrent's wave,
 When swallow'd by a darksome cave.
 Billows on billows burst and boil,
 Maintaining still the stern turmoil,
 And to their wild and tortured groan
 Each adds new terrors of his own !”

“ Unflinching foot 'gainst foot was set,
 Unceasing blow by blow was met ;
 The groans of those who fell
 Were drown'd amid the shriller clang,
 That from the blades and harness rang,
 And in the battle-yell.
 Yet fast they fell, unheard, forgot,
 Both Southern fierce and hardy Scot ;—
 And O ! amid that waste of life,
 What various motives fired the strife !
 The aspiring Noble bled for fame,
 The Patriot for his country's claim ;
 This Knight his youthful strength to prove,
 And that to win his lady's love ;
 Some fought from ruffian thirst of blood,
 From habit some, or hardihood.
 But ruffian stern, and soldier good
 The noble and the slave,
 From various cause the same wild road,
 On the same bloody morning, trode,
 To that dark inn, the Grave !” —CANTO VI.

One more quotation from the notes is subjoined for the use of our orators. The means hitherto tried to obtain eloquence and inspiration have sometimes failed ; perhaps this receipt may be worth trying. Laying on the back in a dark room, with the head bound up, and a weight on the belly, appears to be a singular posture for studying. We hope some of our patriotick speakers may be induced to try the experiment according to this ancient Highland process, and communicate the result for the publick good.

‘The character of the Highland bards, however high in
‘an earlier period of society, seems soon to have degenerated.
‘The Irish affirm, that in their kindred tribes severe laws
‘became necessary to restrain their avarice. In the High-
‘lands they seem gradually to have sunk into contempt, as
‘well as the orators, or men of speech, with whose office
‘that of family poet was often united.

“The orators, in their language called *Isdane*, were in
‘high esteem both in these islands and the continent; until
‘within these forty years, they sat always among the nobles
‘and chiefs of families in the *streak*, or circle. Their
‘houses and little villages were sanctuaries, as well as
‘churches, and they took place before doctors of physick.
‘The orators, after the Druids were extinct, were brought
‘in to preserve the genealogy of families, and to repeat the
‘same at every succession of chief; and upon the occasion
‘of marriages and births, they made *epithalamiums* and
‘*panegyricks*, which the poet or bard pronounced. The
‘orators, by the force of their eloquence, had a powerful
‘ascendant over the greatest men in their time; for if any
‘orator did but ask the habit, arms, horse, or any other
‘thing belonging to the greatest man in these islands, it was
‘readily granted them, sometimes out of respect, and some-
‘times for fear of being exclaimed against by a satire, which
‘in those days was reckoned a great dishonour: but these
‘gentlemen becoming insolent, lost ever since both the profit
‘and esteem which was formerly due to their character;
‘for neither their *panegyricks* nor satires are regarded to
‘what they have been, and they are now allowed but a
‘small salary. I must not omit to relate their way of study,
‘which is very singular: They shut their doors and win-
‘dows for a day’s time, and lie on their backs, with a stone
‘upon their belly, and plads about their heads, and their
‘eyes being covered, they pump their brains for rhetorical
‘*encomium* or *panegyrick*; and indeed they furnish such a
‘style from this dark cell, as is understood by very few:
‘and if they purchase a couple of horses as the reward of
‘their meditation, they think they have done a great matter.
‘The poet, or bard, had a title to the bridegroom’s upper
‘garb, that is, the *plad* and *bonnet*; but now he is satisfied
‘with what the bridegroom pleases to give him on such
‘occasions.”’—NOTE 10 to C. II.